

DRAFT DRAFT

5/28/04

Wyoming Questionnaire - June 21-25:

Background: The Washington Office conducted a Grazing Permit/Lease Renewal Technical Program Review in Wyoming during FY 2000.

The 2004 Annual Work Plan (refer to Evaluation Schedule in General Directives) provides direction that a program review will be conducted to evaluate responses to NEPA/Grazing Permit renewal recommendations from the 2000 program review. This program review will address the current status of efforts to complete rangeland health assessments and renewal of Grazing Permits/Leases in accordance with WO IM 2003-71.

The evaluation team will look at examples of evaluation reports to determine whether there has been improved documentation of rationale and if recommendations have been applied in the Rangeland Health Standards.

Each office visited will be asked to provide a copy of a permit renewal and associated documentation and processes supporting that permit renewal.

A. Internal Relationships

- Have regular interdisciplinary range workshops been effective to share information and discuss issues?
- What areas (i.e. customer service, rangeland health assessment, and grazing permit renewal process) in the range program need to be improved to make the program more effective?
- Does your office encourage employee and external customer participation in rangeland health assessments? Same question for permit renewals?
- Does your Office have appropriate skills to adequately complete accomplish land health assessment and permit renewal processes?
- What areas could be improved for BLM to be more effective involving external customers, i.e. permittee and environmental groups?
- Is there interagency coordination between BLM and other Federal/State Agencies on land health assessments and permit renewals? If so, what's the process for coordinating?
- What strategies or methods would increase the overall satisfaction of the permit renewal process?

B. T/E Consultation

- Does your office conduct formal &/or informal consultation with FWS on permit renewals?
- Are you involved in developing BAs (Biological Assessments) or BEs (Biological Evaluations)? What is your role?
- Are permittees and other outside interests involved when BAs are being developed?
- Are you aware of the IBLA Blake decision that requires the BLM to provide the permittee an administrative hearings process regarding the information in the BA?
- Are consultation processes completed timely in order to get permits processed? Are consultation processes completed timely in accordance with ESA?
- Are there barriers to timely completion of consultation? Do you have suggestions for addressing those barriers?

C. Land Health Standards

- Are evaluation reports and determinations issued as a single document?
- Have riparian and upland assessments been addressed in the evaluation report?
- What skills are included on evaluation teams? Do all team members participate in data collection?
- Do you use the Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health Technical Reference process as a supplement to monitoring data, or as the main source of information for the evaluation?
- How are determinations made in your office? Explain the process taken to come to a conclusion.
- Are assessments completed on a watershed, allotment, transect/polygon, or permit basis?
- Are evaluations completed on a watershed, allotment, transect/polygon, or permit basis?
- Are determinations completed on a watershed, allotment, transect/polygon, or permit basis?

- How do you set priorities for completing land health assessments?
- What process do you use to determine significant causal factors when standards are not achieved?
- Are you doing baseline inventories for soils, ESI, and special status species populations and how much for each year?
- How much monitoring are you doing and what kind?
- Are you using evaluations to make decisions for other activities? What's the role of the range staff in authorizing energy, mineral and reality applications?

D. NEPA and Decision Processes for Grazing Permit Renewals

- Have you received additional cumulative impact analysis guidance since FY 2000? If so, has it been helpful for writing your NEPA document?
- Do evaluation and decision documents contain adequate rationale to defend or explain decisions?
- Do you work with the Solicitor's Office on high risk, complex decisions prior to issuing the decisions? Does your office have a direct contact with the Solicitor's Office?
- Do you consult with permittees and interested parties to develop alternatives for analysis in the NEPA document?
- Do you use DNA's (Documentation of NEPA Adequacy)? Do you use Categorical Exclusions in the permit renewal process?
- Is the NEPA process working satisfactorily in the permit renewal process? If not, why?
- Are you seeing an increase in FOIA's and Discoveries recently? Are you spending more time responding to FOIA requests since 2001? When do you use project code FOIN and LITI?

- What percentage of grazing decisions have been protested and what percent have been appealed?
- Who is filing most of the appeals? What are the grounds for appeal?
- Are you in need of any State or WO policy or guidance to assist with completion of the permit renewal process? What guidance would be helpful?
- Is your Field Office on schedule to complete all permit renewals by 2009? If not, what are the obstacles? What needs to be done to remove these obstacles?
- By the end of this year will you have all your permits that expired in 2000 fully processed?

D. Other Administrative Processes

- How does your office maintain databases in RAS and RIPS? Any recommendations for improving these two systems?